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UNCLAS GUATEMALA 000109

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GUATEMALA: 2005 TERRORISM REPORT

1. There were no significant acts of international terrorism in Guatemala in 2005. The Government of Guatemala (GOG) has supported the war on terrorism in international fora such as the UN and OAS and cooperates fully with the United States. Guatemala ratified the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism in October 2005. The deployment of a GOG Interagency Task Force to the northern Peten Department during the final months of 2005 represented an important government effort to begin to secure control of its northern border with Mexico.

2. Severe resource constraints, corruption, and an ineffective criminal justice system are some of the impediments facing Guatemala in its struggle against transnational crime threats such as drug trafficking and alien smuggling. Guatemala's northern border with Mexico lacks effective coverage by police or military personnel, and controls at its southern and eastern borders with El Salvador have been relaxed as part of the Central American integration process. Guatemala lacks the technology and manpower to effectively monitor transit of possible international terrorists. Nevertheless, Guatemalan authorities provided strong cooperation to U.S. requests for assistance in the investigation of possible terrorism leads. Deployment of the Interagency Task Force North, as mentioned above, is providing a newly effective GOG presence in the previously lawless northwest border region.

3. Guatemalan authorities have responded favorably to requests for enhanced security of official U.S. property and personnel on an as-needed basis. Guatemalan law enforcement authorities do not have wiretapping authority, but this deficiency is being addressed in legislation pending before the Guatemalan Congress. Law enforcement authorities can initiate physical surveillance of terrorist suspects, but the police have limited capabilities. Military intelligence personnel were involved in counterterrorism investigations in the past, but recent military personnel and budget reductions have greatly reduced military intelligence capabilities, and the military is legally and politically constrained from significant participation in any internal security roles other than support for police patrols. Terrorism suspects -- like detainees suspected of any other type of crime -- can only be held for six hours without being charged.

4. Guatemala has continued to strengthen its anti-money laundering and terrorism finance regime since removal from the Financial Action Task Force list of Non-Cooperative Countries in July 2004. The GOG Financial Intelligence Unit (IVE) is an active partner of USG and multi-lateral efforts to track terrorism finance and reduce financial sector vulnerabilities. There is no credible evidence of terrorism financing in Guatemala; and the GOG, along with private financial sector actors, actively cooperates in looking for such funds. Anti-Terrorism Finance legislation passed in August of 2005 strengthens the government's ability to react to and deter terrorism financing and complies with international standards.

5. Guatemalan civil aviation and port authorities have been very responsive to U.S. requests for assistance in investigating potential terrorism leads. The Guatemalan Government is currently working to enhance overall maritime and aviation security and counterterrorism capabilities in order to remain in compliance with rising international standards. However, organized crime and smuggling rings continue to operate in Guatemala's principal ports and airports, and, together with corruption, pose an ongoing security threat.

6. Guatemala is a party to 10 of the 12 United Nations conventions and protocols related to terrorism and to one OAS counterterrorism convention.

DERHAM